

# **EXHIBIT L**



12 of 69 DOCUMENTS

Copyright 2008 The Washington Post  
All Rights Reserved

# The Washington Post

---

## washingtonpost.com

The Washington Post

March 23, 2008 Sunday  
Met 2 Edition

**SECTION:** A-SECTION; Pg. A01

**DISTRIBUTION:** Virginia

**LENGTH:** 1782 words

**HEADLINE:** Stalwart Service for U.S. in Iraq Is Not Enough to Gain Green Card

**BYLINE:** Karen DeYoung; Washington Post Staff Writer

**BODY:**

During his nearly four years as a translator for U.S. forces in Iraq, Saman Kareem Ahmad was known for his bravery and hard work. "Sam put his life on the line with, and for, Coalition Forces on a daily basis," wrote Marine Capt. Trent A. Gibson.

Gibson's letter was part of a thick file of support -- including commendations from the secretary of the Navy and from then-Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus -- that helped Ahmad migrate to the United States in 2006, among an initial group of 50 **Iraqi** and **Afghan translators** admitted under a special visa program.

Last month, however, the U.S. government turned down Ahmad's application for permanent residence, known as a green card. His offense: Ahmad had once been part of the Kurdish Democratic Party, which U.S. immigration officials deemed an "undesigned terrorist organization" for having sought to overthrow former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

Ahmad, a Kurd, once served in the KDP's military force, which is part of the new Iraqi army. A U.S. ally, the KDP is now part of the elected government of the Kurdish region and holds seats in the Iraqi parliament. After consulting public Web sites, however, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services determined that KDP forces "conducted

Stalwart Service for U.S. in Iraq Is Not Enough to Gain Green Card The Washington Post March 23, 2008 Sunday

full-scale armed attacks and helped incite rebellions against Hussein's regime, most notably during the Iran-Iraq war, Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom."

Ahmad's association with a group that had attempted to overthrow a government -- even as an ally in U.S.-led wars against Hussein -- rendered him "inadmissible," the agency concluded in a three-page letter dated Feb. 26.

In an interview Friday at Quantico Marine Corps Base, where he teaches Arabic language and culture to Marines deploying to Iraq, Ahmad's voice quavered, and his usually precise English failed him. "I am shamed," he said. He has put off his plans to marry a seamstress who tailors Marine uniforms. "I don't want my family live in America; they feel ashamed I'm with a terrorist group. I want them to be proud for what I did for the United States Marine Corps," said Ahmad, 38.

"After I receive this letter, it's been three weeks, since then my whole life turns upside down. You might hear from the lawyer, they're not going to revoke your [visa], but how can you guarantee this? . . . I'm expecting, they stop the process of green card, tomorrow they're going to tell you to get out."

A nearly identical denial was sent the same day to another **Iraqi Kurdish translator** living in this country, according to Thomas Ragland, a lawyer with Maggio and Kattar, the Washington law firm representing both men in court challenges to the denials. The second translator, who worked with U.S. intelligence and Special Forces in Iraq starting several years before the U.S. invasion, declined to discuss his case out of fear for his family in Iraq.

Petraeus, now the top U.S. commander in Iraq, said in an e-mail that he did not recall Ahmad personally but that KDP forces had performed valuable security services for the 101st Airborne Division he led in the northern city of Mosul in 2003. He said he had never heard of any U.S. agency labeling the KDP as terrorists.

Many of the thousands of Iraqis who have served as linguists for U.S. forces have been threatened in Iraq. Ahmad left the country after he was branded a "collaborator" from mosque pulpits in Anbar province and posters calling for his death began appearing there.

Under congressional pressure to allow such translators into the United States, the Bush administration in 2006 authorized 50 visas for them annually. That number was increased to 500 in fiscal 2008, and the quota will revert to 50 a year in fiscal 2009. In announcing the program, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) emphasized that it allows translators "to gain admission to the United States, apply for permanent residency and eventually acquire U.S. citizenship."

According to Petraeus's command, 648 of the 5,300 **Iraqi translators** now working for U.S. forces in Iraq had special-visa applications pending as of December. Petraeus has assigned legal officers to facilitate their petitions, helping gather the documents, signatures and military affidavits required, and said he has signed many letters urging individual approvals. The program's Special Immigrant Visa allows only entry into the United States, however, and immigrants are advised to petition for permanent residence upon arrival.

Retired Marine Capt. Jason P. Schauble, who returned from Iraq in 2004 after being wounded, is Ahmad's official sponsor. In a letter he appended last week to Ahmad's immigration file, Schauble condemned whatever "faceless bureaucracy" rejected the application. "I don't know what a foreigner has to do that is greater than what Saman Ahmad has done in service to his American allies," Schauble wrote.

USCIS spokesman Peter Vietti said regulations prevent him from commenting on any specific case, adding that denials can be appealed only in court. After inquires about Ahmad from The Washington Post, he said, "I can tell you the matter is being looked into."

The second youngest of five children, Ahmad was away at college when Saddam Hussein, striking at rebellious Kurds, launched a chemical gas attack against Ahmad's home town, Halabja, in 1988. The infamous assault, in which

Stalwart Service for U.S. in Iraq Is Not Enough to Gain Green Card The Washington Post March 23, 2008 Sunday

more than 5,000 died, was often cited by the Bush administration as part of its justification for invading Iraq. It left Ahmad without a single living relative, as he has recounted to Americans many times over the past six years.

After graduation from Salahadeen University in Irbil, Ahmad was conscripted into Hussein's army, served his time and then held various jobs. He turned to smuggling and spent a period in jail, then fled to Turkey. He worked as a hotel dishwasher in Istanbul. When he decided to return home in December 2001, he turned himself in to Turkish police as an illegal immigrant and was deported.

At the time, KDP forces were fighting both Hussein and a rival Kurdish party. Ahmad joined the KDP militia. "I don't have any resources, I don't own a penny. I want to eat," he recalled. In his area of Kurdistan at the time, "even you cannot clean up street if you do not become part of that group."

By early 2003, U.S. Special Forces in the region were working to unify the Kurds as allies in the invasion of Iraq. Ahmad, the only English-speaker in his KDP unit, became a translator and liaison. After Petraeus's arrival in Mosul, Ahmad's offer to work full time for the Americans was turned down on grounds it would anger his KDP commander, he said.

He deserted the KDP military and decided to try his luck at U.S. headquarters in Baghdad, taking with him the commendation for his "outstanding service and dedication to the 101st" signed by Petraeus on Sept. 11, 2003.

In Baghdad, Ahmad became a Marine translator and was sent to Anbar. In an affidavit, Gibson -- now a major -- said Ahmad was the first translator in Iraq to wear a Marine uniform, body armor and helmet, and "the first one to be entrusted with a weapon." Ahmad accompanied Gibson's Kilo Company on more than 200 patrols over seven months in violent areas of western Iraq. "I simply could not have accomplished my mission without Sam's tireless and unconditional efforts," Gibson wrote.

But threats against Ahmad's life by anti-coalition forces led the Marines to decide to get him out of Iraq. Schauble shepherded his visa application and met him at John F. Kennedy International Airport on arrival.

A USCIS "Fact Sheet" on special translator visas notes that applicants must be "otherwise admissible to the United States for permanent residence," so Ahmad and Schauble foresaw little problem in his obtaining a green card. To buttress his case, Ahmad successfully applied for political asylum once he reached the United States.

In 2006, he began applying for permanent residence -- submitting the same documents that had won him a visa and asylum -- and finished the process last August.

In the meantime, he continued working for the Marines at the Quantico-based Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning, established in 2005 when the corps realized that its lack of knowledge and understanding of Iraq was undermining its mission.

Ahmad spends much of his time being flown by Marines to training bases around the country to provide rudimentary Arabic and cultural pointers. The maximum language training is 40 hours, which he said is too little. "But at least you can teach him to say a tactical word, how to survive," how not to shoot "a guy who didn't stop" at a checkpoint. Those on their second or third tours have more complicated queries, he said. "They say: okay, we're going to go there and it's Ramadan time, what is 'no'? What is 'do this -- don't do this'? What do I tell my Marines?"

According to Human Rights First, a nonprofit that handles similar immigration cases, groups such as the KDP do not appear on U.S. government lists of designated terrorists. Instead, determinations of "undesigned terrorist organizations" are made, case by case, by the USCIS, part of the Department of Homeland Security.

Using definitions in the Immigration and Nationality Act, the USA Patriot Act and other legislation adopted after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, it is up to USCIS officials to research an applicant's background and make a decision.

Stalwart Service for U.S. in Iraq Is Not Enough to Gain Green Card The Washington Post March 23, 2008 Sunday

According to Ahmad's denial letter, the information in his case was obtained from the Web site of the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, a DHS-funded nonprofit group.

The legislation contains waiver provisions -- by the secretary of state for foreign petitioners, and the secretary of homeland security for those who, like Ahmad, are already in this country. But there is no path for a denied individual to apply for a waiver.

In a velvet box in his desk drawer at Quantico, Ahmad keeps two medals he received for his service in Iraq -- the Navy-Marine Corps Achievement Medal and the War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal. Above his computer, he has a snapshot of President Bush. He was a guest at the White House last year when Bush presented a posthumous Medal of Honor to a Marine for actions in an Anbar mission in which Ahmad participated.

Ahmad remains in this country under his special visa and asylum status, but neither one has the permanence of a green card. Under U.S. law, those granted asylum can be sent back to their country if the secretary of state determines that it is at peace and that the danger to the person has subsided.

Ahmad said he would like to return to Iraq, but only "as a Marine." He has no family there, he said, but "I have the greatest, biggest family in America. I have the USMC."

**GRAPHIC: IMAGE;** By Bill O'leary -- The Washington Post; Saman Kareem Ahmad, granted a special visa as a translator for the Marines in Iraq, has been rejected for permanent U.S. residence because at one time he fought with Kurdish forces seeking the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

**IMAGE;** By Bill O'leary -- The Washington Post; Ahmad works at the Marine Corps Base at Quantico, teaching Marines heading to Iraq about Arabic language and culture.

**IMAGE;** Courtesy Of Saman Kareem Ahmad; Saman Kareem Ahmad, left, served with then-Capt. Trent A. Gibson. Gibson backs Ahmad's application for permanent U.S. residence.

**IMAGE;** By Bill O'leary -- The Washington Post; A plaque of appreciation from the 3rd Marine Air Wing is displayed on Ahmad's desk at Quantico.

**IMAGE**

**LOAD-DATE:** March 23, 2008